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March 14, 2000
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NEWS RELEASE

(Editor's Note: To request an advance telephone interview with Art Buchwald, contact Teri Rizvi at (937) 229-3241.)

PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING SATIRIST ART BUCHWALD TO KEYNOTE ERMA BOMBECK CONFERENCE ON POPULAR AMERICAN HUMOR

DAYTON, Ohio — There's a lot Art Buchwald won't reveal about Erma Bombeck — yet.

The Pulitzer Prize-winning satirist will give the keynote address, "Things I Cannot Tell You," at the Erma Bombeck Conference on Popular American Humor at 8 p.m. on Thursday, March 30, at the Thomas J. Frericks Athletics and Convocation Center at the University of Dayton. It's free and open to the public. Preceding his talk, he'll take part in a \$50 per plate or \$75 per couple 5:30 p.m. dinner in the Kennedy Union Ballroom to help UD launch the Library Advancement Association. Guests will receive an autographed copy of his book, *A Memoir: I'll Always Have Paris!* Reservation deadline is March 23. For tickets, call Anita Brothers at 229-2902.

"I don't want to give away too many of my lines," he apologizes in a phone interview, "but I will reveal for the first time Erma's role in the American Academy of Humor Columnists."

Never heard of it? Described by Buchwald as "pure invention," the group of humorists, which includes Russell Baker, Calvin Trillin, Andy Rooney, Mark Russell and Dave Barry, never met but corresponded through letters in a "non-P.C. and irreverent" fashion for years.

Buchwald says Bombeck relished her role as the token woman.

"Erma was the first woman we allowed into the Academy of Humor Columnists, and I was responsible," he says. "The only reason we let her in was that she begged. She liked being the only woman. Just to get her mad, sometimes we talked about putting Sophia Loren in."

Why did Buchwald and Bombeck become such great friends? "Sex," Buchwald deadpans. "It was all sex. I was the sexiest humorist she knew."

When Bombeck died in 1996 after undergoing a kidney transplant, Buchwald set the quips aside to write a tender tribute. "Erma was just a wonderful friend, and her humor

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transcended what she did for a living," he writes. "Erma's gift to the country was that she provided people with humor, and there was no other person who could do it in quite the way she did."

Buchwald, 74, still writes a twice-weekly internationally syndicated column that's carried by some 300 newspapers through the Los Angeles Times Syndicate. His satirical column has been syndicated for nearly half a century. "Today, I wrote about how all the politicians are using God during the election (season). I talked to God, and he denied that he's very interested in anybody," he says. Another recent column expressed mock outrage that *People* magazine could choose Richard Gere over Buchwald as the sexiest man alive and plaster Gere's picture on the cover. "I want a recount," he demands in his column. "You can't elect the sexiest man alive and eliminate me because I'm not in moving pictures. If you want testimonials, I'll get testimonials. Sophia Loren is crazy about me, and I'm constantly being stalked by Sharon Stone."

A master of parody, irony and satire, Buchwald has written 27 books, including a novel, a play and two children's books. In 1982, Buchwald won the Pulitzer Prize for "Outstanding Commentary." In 1986, he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. *Stella in Heaven: Almost a Novel*, about a dead wife who is still running her husband's life from the clouds, will be published in August.

Following his talk, Buchwald will sign copies of *A Memoir: I'll Always Have Paris!* On Friday, March 31, he'll offer remarks during a luncheon presentation of Erma Bombeck's papers to UD and give a workshop, "Life is a Bowl of Cherries": Writing Satire," at the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop. The cost for the writers' workshop, including lunch, is \$75. The cost of the luncheon only is \$15. Registration deadline is March 22.

Parking for the 8 p.m. public address on March 30 is available at the NCR parking lot on the corner of Brown and Stewart streets. For parking on campus, go to UD's visitor center through the main entrance on Stewart Street.

Besides Buchwald's keynote address and the writers' workshop, the March 29-April 1 Erma Bombeck Conference on Popular American Humor features a writing competition, an academic symposium, an "Evening with Erma's Friends" presentation and a series of book signings and on-line chats. For information about any of the events, call (937) 229-3241 or visit www.ActiveDayton.com/entertainment/erma/.

The conference is sponsored by UD's National Alumni Association in conjunction with ActiveDayton.com, Books & Co., *Dayton Daily News*, News-Talk 1290 WHIO, Suburban Newspapers of Dayton, Think TV Network, Washington-Centerville Public Library, WHIO-TV and WYSO-Radio. Buchwald's speech is part of UD's 1999-2000 Distinguished Speaker Series.